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Most Americans Continue To Take Individualistic Approach To Religion

Princeton, N.J. — Three Americans in every four (76%) believe that one can be a good Christian or Jew and not attend religious services.

This proportion has changed little over the last three decades. In 1978 the percentage was 78% and in 1957 the figure was also 78%. This finding will be worrisome to church leaders, many of whom believe that active participation in a worshipping community is vital to a maturing faith.

Most who are inclined to say that one can be a good Christian or Jew and not attend religious services are college graduates, Catholics, persons who live on the West Coast, and persons who are currently unchurched.

Here is the question:

Do you think a person can be a good Christian or Jew if he or she doesn't attend church or synagogue?

The trend:

Good Christian Or Jew If Do Not Attend Services?

	Yes	No	No opinion
	%	%	%
1988	76	20	4
1978	78	17	5
1957	78	17	5

(NOTE: This question was asked in the 1957 survey: *Do you think a person can be a good Christian if he doesn't go to church?*)

The following table shows the latest results by key groups:

Good Christian Or Jew If Do Not Attend Services?

	Yes	No	No opinion
TOTAL	**76%**	**20%**	**4%**
CHURCH STATUS			
Churched	67	29	4
Unchurched	88	9	3
SEX			
Male	75	21	4
Female	78	19	3
AGE			
Under 30	80	16	4
18-24 years	77	19	4
25-29 years	84	12	4
30-49 years	79	18	3
50 & older	71	26	3
RACE			
White	78	19	3
Black	68	28	4
Hispanic	64	31	5
REGION			
East	77	19	4
Midwest	81	17	2
South	68	27	5
West	83	14	3
EDUCATION			
Less than H.S.	68	28	4
H.S. graduate	77	20	3
Some college	77	18	5
College graduate	84	12	4
RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE			
Protestant	72	25	3
Catholic	83	13	4
Other	81	16	3

Most Teens Approve of Mixed Marriages

The great majority of teens approve of interracial and interfaith marriages, although resistance to mixed marriages remains strong in the South, according to the latest Gallup Youth Survey.

Two teens in three (65 percent) say they approve of marriages between whites and blacks. Disapproving are 30 percent, and 5 percent hold no opinion on such marriages. The level of approval is slightly greater than that found in 1985, when 61 percent of the teens approved of interracial marriages, and much higher than 1977, when only 52 percent voiced approval.

Approval of interfaith marriages, however, has declined slightly. In 1988, marriages between Catholics and Protestants are given approval by 72 percent of the teens. There is disapproval of such marriages by 15 percent of the teens, while 13 percent are undecided. In 1977, marriages between Catholics and Protestants received approval by 76 percent of teens.

Also in 1977, 77 percent of the teens approved of marriages between Jews and non-Jews. In 1988, approval is received from 75 percent of the teens, while 13 percent disapprove, and 12 percent have no opinion.

The overall level of teen acceptance of mixed marriages would be much higher had acceptance not been so low in the South. Among teens living in the South, only 42 percent say they would approve of marriages between whites and blacks. Similarly, far less acceptance of interfaith marriages is found in the South, with only 47 percent approval of marriages between Catholics and Protestants, and 57 percent for matrimony between Jews and non-Jews.

Non-whites (87 percent) are more likely than whites (60 percent) to approve of interracial marriages. But the non-whites are less tolerant of interfaith marriages. Only 61 percent of non-whites approve of marriages between Catholics and Protestants, compared with 74 percent approval from whites. Whites (76 percent) are also more likely than non-whites (68 percent) to approve of marriages between Jews and non-Jews.

Catholics (66 percent) are more likely than Protestants (61 percent) to approve of marriages by partners of their respective denominations. Catholics are also more tolerant than Protestant youth of marriages between whites and blacks (71 percent) and Jews and non-Jews (82 percent).

The religious or racial background of marriage partners appears to be of less importance to teens who are not regular church attenders, with 71 percent approving of interracial marriages, and about two in three believing interfaith marriages are acceptable.

Here is how the questions were asked:

Do you approve or disapprove of marriages between whites and blacks? Catholics and Protestants? Jews and non-Jews?

The findings reported today are based on telephone interviews with a representative national cross section of 500 teen-agers, 13 through 17, conducted between September 3 and 30, 1988.

Approval of Mixed Marriages

	Whites and Blacks	Catholics and Protestants	Jews and Non-Jews
	%	%	%
NATIONAL	65	72	75
Male	62	71	74
Female	67	72	75
Ages 13-15	64	69	72
Ages 16 to 17	66	74	78
White	60	74	76
Non-white	87	61	68
Above-average students	68	80	78
Average or below	60	61	71
Attend church regularly	60	67	70
Do not attend regularly	71	76	80
Protestants	60	61	70
Catholics	71	66	82
East	74	92	90
Midwest	75	83	81
South	42	47	57
West	77	71	76

Little Change in Major Faiths

The 1988 audit indicates little change in recent years in the relative strength of *major faiths* in this country, with 56% in the latest series of surveys giving their religious preference as Protestant, 28% as Roman Catholic, 2% as Jewish, and 2% as Mormons.

Those who say they have no religious preference, 10%, closely matches the figure recorded in the five previous years. The current figure, however, is significantly higher than the 2% recorded in 1967. The annual audit of religious preference (for major faiths) was initiated by The Gallup Poll in 1947.

Here is the question and the findings for 1988:

What is your religious preference — Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish, Mormon, or an Orthodox Church such as the Greek or Russian Orthodox Church?

Religious Preferences

Protestant	56%
Roman Catholic	28
Jewish	2
Mormon (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)	2
Eastern Orthodox	*
Other	2
None**	10

*Less than one percent.
**Includes one percent no opinion/no answer.

Here is the four-decade trend. Specific figures for the Mormon and Eastern Orthodox Churches are omitted because of insufficient historical data, and are included under the "other" category.

Religious Preferences

	Protestant %	Catholic %	Jewish %	Other %	None %
		-Yearly-			
1988	56	28	2	4	10
1987	57	28	2	4	9
1986	58	27	2	4	9
1985	57	28	2	4	9
1984	57	28	2	4	9
1983	56	29	2	4	9
1982	57	29	2	4	8
1981	59	28	2	4	7
1980	61	28	2	2	7
1979	59	29	2	2	8
1977-78	60	29	2	1	8
1976	61	27	2	4	6
1975	62	27	2	4	6
1974	60	27	2	5	6
		-By 5-year periods-			
1972	63	26	2	4	5
1967	67	25	3	3	2
1962	70	23	3	2	2
1957	66	26	3	1	3
1952	67	25	4	1	2
1947	69	20	5	1	6

NOTE: Results for some years do not add to 100% because of rounding.

27% of British Believe In Ghosts; 9% Say They Have Seen One

In a special series on the "paranormal," the British Gallup Poll discovers that a fourth of the British people believe in ghosts, while 9% maintain they have seen one.

Here are the questions, results, and trend:

Which of these do you believe in?:

		Oct. 1988 %	June 1986 %
a) Hypnotism?	Yes	45	37
	No	47	56
	Don't know	8	7
b) Black magic?	Yes	11	8
	No	84	87
	Don't know	5	5
c) Horoscopes?	Yes	23	23
	No	74	72
	Don't know	3	5
d) Life after death?	Yes	37	40
	No	48	45
	Don't know	15	15
e) Thought transference between two people?	Yes	53	52
	No	36	38
	Don't know	11	10
f) Ghosts?	Yes	27	27
	No	65	65
	Don't know	8	8
g) Flying saucers?	Yes	21	19
	No	67	72
	Don't know	11	9
h) Faith healing?	Yes	48	46
	No	43	42
	Don't know	9	12
i) Being able to forecast that something is going to happen before it actually happens?	Yes	54	52
	No	39	42
	Don't know	7	6
j) Lucky charms or lucky mascots?	Yes	17	19
	No	80	79
	Don't know	3	2
k) Exchanging messages with the dead?	Yes	14	14
	No	78	78
	Don't know	8	8

Déjà Vu Is Common Experience

Have you ever been somewhere or has something ever happened to you, when you've thought that you've been there before or that it had happened before?

	Oct. 1988 %	June 1986 %
Yes	66	62
No	33	35
Don't know	1	3

Have you ever seen a ghost?

	Oct. 1988 %	June 1986 %
Yes	9	12
No	88	85
Not sure	3	3

Have you ever paid to have your fortune told?

	Oct. 1988 %	June 1986 %
Yes	21	24
No	79	76

NOTE: Results for some questions do not add to 100% because of rounding.

Attitudes on Abortion Little Changed Since Supreme Court's 1973 Ruling

Few issues in recent years have so sharply divided the American people as a woman's right to have an abortion. Yet public opinion on this issue has remained virtually unchanged since the Supreme Court's landmark 1973 decision upholding that right.

A 57% majority now favors legal abortions only under certain circumstances, while 24% say in any circumstance, and 17% an outright ban. The latest findings are similar to those of earlier surveys. In 1975, for instance, 54% approved of abortions under certain conditions, 21% thought they should be legal under any circumstances, and 22% would make them illegal in all circumstances.

Large majorities of those who approve of abortions only under certain circumstances think they should be legal if the woman's life is endangered (94%), if the pregnancy results from rape or incest (85%), if the woman's physical health may be severely impaired, and if there is a chance the baby will be deformed (60%). They reject abortions solely on economic grounds — if the family cannot afford to have the child — 75% to 19%.

Supreme Court Ruling

In 1973 the Supreme Court ruled the states cannot place restrictions on a woman's right to an abortion during the first three months of pregnancy. In the second trimester the states have no authority to prevent abortion but can regulate certain of the medical aspects involved. Only during the final trimester, when medical experts generally agree that the fetus is capable of living outside the womb, can states impose restrictions on a woman's right to an abortion.

Republicans, Democrats, and Independents share almost identical opinions on the legality of abortions. Little difference is found on the basis of sex or age. Protestants and Catholics are in close agreement although the Roman Catholic Church does not sanction abortions for any reason. Nonwhites, evangelicals, the less educated, and less affluent hold more conservative opinions; whites, non-evangelicals, college graduates, those with family incomes of $40,000 or more, Easterners, and Westerners espouse more liberal views.

Opposition to the Reagan Administration's decision to block Federal financing of family-planning clinics that provide abortion counselling outweighs support, 66% to 26%, with majorities of Republicans (54%), Democrats (76%), and Independents (65%) disapproving of this decision.

Here is the trend question on abortion:

Do you think abortions should be legal under any circumstances, legal only under certain circumstances, or illegal in all circumstances?

Attitudes Toward Abortion

	Legal		Illegal
	Any circumstances %	Certain circumstances %	All circumstances %
1988	24	57	17
1983	23	58	16
1981	23	52	21
1980	25	53	18
1979	22	54	19
1977	22	55	19
1975	21	54	22

NOTE: "No opinion" omitted.

Please tell me whether you think abortions should or should not be legal under each of the following circumstances: If the woman's life is endangered? If the woman may suffer severe physical health damage? If there is a chance the baby will be born deformed? If the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest? If the family cannot afford to have the child?

Legal Grounds For Abortion
(Based on those who approve of abortions under certain circumstances)

	Appove %	Disapprove %	No opinion %
Woman's life endangered	94	2	4
Rape or incest	85	11	4
Woman's health impaired	84	11	5
Baby born deformed	60	29	11
Can't afford child	19	75	6

The latest results are based on telephone interviews with 1,001 adults, 18 and older, conducted in scientifically selected localities across the nation Sept. 25-Oct. 1. For results based on samples of this size, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects could be 4 percentage points in either direction.

How To Reach The Unchurched American

Millions of Americans remain unchurched, and many churches are continuing to experience losses in membership. What can be done to reach the unchurched American? How can present members be kept in the fold?

New light is shed on these pressing questions by the results of a just-completed major survey of the nation's adults, THE UNCHURCHED AMERICAN — 1988. The focus of this survey is on the factors that cause people to leave the church — and those that cause them to return.

This survey, which reports updates of many of the questions asked in the landmark survey of a decade ago (THE UNCHURCHED AMERICAN, 1978), compares and contrasts the attitudes of the churched and unchurched on social changes, lifestyle factors, basic religious beliefs and many other factors that are related to churchlessness.

Special attention in this 1988 survey has been given to the religious experience and needs of blacks and Hispanics in the United States.

The report, based on this important survey, provides full statistical details, comparisons with 1978 results, as well as a special section which offers practical steps to reach the unchurched in your community.

For good, solid, practical information that can help YOU in YOUR ministry — both in reaching new people and in deepening the commitment of the present members of your church — write for the new report, THE UNCHURCHED AMERICAN — 1988.

To place your order write: The Princeton Religion Research Center, P.O. Box 628, Princeton, NJ 08542. Cost per copy is $29.00.

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